



Christian Hope and Joy During Advent

As the season of Advent begins we are reminded of the importance of a renewed life of prayer, because prayer opens the door to hope, and as St. Paul observes: **"Hope does not disappoint" (Romans 5:5).**

We live in what is in many ways an age of fear, an age of uncertainty. Despite the technological advances of our time, so many signs speak to us of a profound emptiness at the heart of our postmodern culture.

Amid the many challenges that we face, one of the dangers is that people give in to a spirit of hopelessness.

But during this season of Advent, our faith gives us a great reason to renew our hope and trust in God. As the prophet Isaiah writes,

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar upon eagles' wings; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not grow faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

The primary object of our Hope is God, the Kingdom of Heaven, and everlasting life with the Angels and Saints.

And so, let us place our hope and trust in God, who promises to **"make all things new"** (Rev 21:5). For **"our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 124:8).** Placing our hope in God, rather than in our own abilities, leads us to raise our sights upward, toward heaven.

During this season of Advent, then, let us strive to live our faith authentically, deeply, in all of its dimensions, and to draw ever closer to the God of love, mercy, and peace revealed by Jesus Christ as we journey through this passing world.

And let us always hope and trust in the amazing power of prayer.

St. Paul exhorts the faithful to **"pray always" (1 Thess. 5:16-18; Eph. 6:18).** So too, in the Parables of **"the friend at night" (in Luke 11:5-8),** and the Parable of **"the persistent widow" (Luke 18:1-8),** Our Lord Himself underscores the great importance of persistence in prayer.

For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened (Luke 11:10).

In addition to hope, a spirit of joy marks the season of Advent. Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, joy is not the result of our own doing, but is one of the Perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory.

When we meditate upon Scripture, we see that even in the midst of life's most difficult circumstances, great joy is expressed by the prophets around God's promise to renew all of creation.

Joy emerges as an important theme in St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians. More than an emotion, joy is a state of spiritual stability in the midst of life's changing fortunes.

Joy allows us to look beyond the sorrows and disorders of this passing world and, as with hope, it prompts us to raise our sights upward toward God, toward Christ's victory over the forces of sin, suffering and death, and ultimately, to **"rejoice in the Lord" and to do so "always" (Phil. 3:1; 4:4).**

Like the Magi, who followed the star that led them to Bethlehem, let us focus our sights upon Jesus Christ, **the Morning Star (Rev. 22:16).** Let us prepare joyfully for His arrival at Christmas, as we strive to do our own part to bring the light, love and mercy of God to all those around us, especially to those who are most in need during these difficult times.

And may the light of Christ that dawns upon a darkened world illuminate our minds, **Like a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Peter 1:19).**

During this season of Advent, let us pray for the grace to experience a genuine spiritual renewal as we prepare joyfully to welcome the Christ Child this Christmas.

And let us pray that God may strengthen our hope in His own power to renew all things in Christ. Amen.

